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Introduction

The ten essays that make up *J. G. Ballard: Landscapes of Tomorrow* address various kinds of landscapes in Ballard's writing and respond to the "spatial turn" in the arts and humanities, which opens a rich new vista for the reading of narrative fiction. Often informed by interdisciplinary and theoretical approaches, the themes explored here re-cast the concept of the spatial at the same time as grounding their analysis in it. For such analysis the fiction of J. G. Ballard immediately recommends itself. Landscapes and spatiality are crucial to Ballard's imagination though not in an unmediated or straightforwardly naturalistic sense. Landscapes whether environmental, cultural, psychological, digital or political inform the approaches to his work which follow.

In 1968, fascinated by the new kind of science fiction Ballard was producing, the Danish poet Jannick Storm commented: "Well, this is why your landscapes are not real, I suppose. They are sort of symbolic." Ballard replied:

Well, they are not real in the sense that I don't write naturalistically about the present day. Though, in the latest group of stories I've started to write, these stories written in paragraph form, which I call 'condensed novels,' there I'm using the landscape of the present day. The chief characters in these stories are people like Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy and so on. There I'm using present-day landscapes. Obviously if you're going to set most of your fiction several years ahead of the present, you're going to have to use an invented landscape to some extent, because you can't write naturalistically

about London or New York twenty years from now. It must be an invented landscape to a certain extent. (*EM* 16)

Ballard here contrasts the “invented landscape” of future-oriented fictions with the “landscape of the present day” that is the subject of the condensed novels in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), thereby acknowledging that those landscapes too form part of the imaginative project of his work. That text provides the centerpoint of this volume, being the main focus of three of the essays and a point of reference for all the others. Among Ballard’s works its various landscapes are some of the most challenging and extensive and consequently inform the range of here. Ballard’s landscapes may be “invented” yet his readers and critics *are well aware* that his landscapes of the present are no more “naturalistic” than the invented landscapes of the future. His fiction famously re-orientates the conventional science-fiction landscapes of outer space to those of “inner space.” In his own words, “landscape is a formalization of space and time. And the external landscapes directly reflect interior states of mind” (*EM* 5). “In literature,” as Margaret Atwood puts it, “every landscape is a state of mind, but every state of mind can also be portrayed by a landscape” (*In Other Worlds* 75).

In the notes that Ballard wrote to accompany *The Atrocity Exhibition*, he introduces the phrase “media landscape” (*AE* 37, 145, 163), thereby adding a third and no less significant dimension to the configurations of the landscapes of tomorrow that are imagined in the fiction and discussed in the essays in this collection. Ballard’s prescient analyses of our landscapes of culture and information have done much to drive the increased awareness of the contemporary relevance and urgency of his work. Alongside classic theorists of the spatial turn since Joseph Frank, such as Fredric Jameson, Edward Soja, Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, critics here assembled

draw on a range of other writers and theorists to help map these landscapes, including thinkers as diverse as Marx, Freud, R.D. Laing, Alfred Korzybski, Gregory Bateson and Marc Augé.

Fredric Jameson's recognition, developed in *Archaeologies of the Future*, that significant challenges are still posed to critical recuperation by science-fiction and speculative literatures, is gradually being more widely accepted in academic circles, as the traumatic birth of one new century gives way to our need to imagine the futures of the next. Works such as David James's *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space* demonstrate the validity of spatial approaches across the contemporary fictional sphere. Ballard's work is an especially rich and fertile field in these respects.

The fragmentary structure of *The Atrocity Exhibition* produces multiple potential narratives and a series of cultural landscapes embedded with different levels of literary and spatial reference. It is Ballard's most challenging and experimental book, developing themes from his earlier disaster novels and prefiguring some of his later, most celebrated and discussed works in which many of the psychological, social and political insights it traces are embodied more fully. In this collection, earlier texts such as *The Drowned World* (1962), "The Terminal Beach" (1964), "The Dead Astronaut" (1968) and *Vermilion Sands* (first published as a collection in 1971) that establish many of the recurrent ideas in *The Atrocity Exhibition* are discussed. Their transformed post-apocalyptic environments appear also as emerging landscapes of memory. Essays in the middle section consider *The Atrocity Exhibition* itself in the context of various cultural landscapes, including the influence of literary modernism and collections of ephemera termed invisible literature. The final section traces Ballard's continuing fascination with the themes of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, concentrating on the distinctive physical and psychological landscapes described in three of his

more recent dystopian texts: *Crash* (1973) whose material most directly emerges from *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *High-Rise* (1975) and *Kingdom Come* (2006).

Different kinds of space and different spatial concepts underpin the essays collected here, from the landscapes of Ballard's youth in Shanghai and his writing life in suburban London, to nuclear testing spaces (notably, the Pacific Islands) and the exploration of outer space. Also discussed are the figurative locations typical of Ballard's work: the beach, the motorway, the high-rise and the shopping mall. Textual spaces are explored through Ballard's affiliation with modernist and other literary forms, including surrealist prose writing, collage, and poetic romanticism. Likewise, examination of Ballard's use of what he calls invisible literature, such as the photographic records of nuclear testing and medical accounts of crash injuries, voice an emerging area of scholarship for Ballard studies.

The interdisciplinary range of the volume includes literature, visual cultures, fine art, archival studies, digital humanities, politics and sociology. The geographical reach is also broad, with contributions from British, Continental European and China-based scholars, writers and academics, including an imaginative contribution from one of Ballard's two daughters, the artist Fay Ballard, whose recent exhibition *House Clearance* (Eleven Spitalfields Gallery, 2014) drew richly on her father's legacy.

Fay Ballard's "Shanghai/Shepperton" is a piece of imaginative writing which fittingly opens the volume by expressing the complex layering of familiar and distant places that was such a remarkable feature of Ballard's childhood. Her work might be thought to inform the fascinations with landscape in Ballard's work, familiarizing the distant and exotic, and distancing the familiarity of suburbia at the same time.

In the chapter which follows, Graham Matthews richly develops this position, arguing that, though set in London, *The Drowned World* recalls the landscape of Shanghai where Ballard lived until he was sixteen. Matthews shows that Ballard recalls post-war Shanghai as a place filled with abandoned buildings, empty swimming pools and collapsed irrigation systems. This is reflected in the novel, where descriptions of the Ritz are more reminiscent of Shanghai's Peace Hotel and repeated references to bamboo groves, lush vegetation, huge rivers, canals, and flooded paddy fields also recall Shanghai. Just as characters in the novel steadily regress into primordial forms, *The Drowned World* reaches back to Ballard's own archaeopsychic past: "[P]erhaps these sunken lagoons simply remind me of the drowned world of my uterine childhood" (*DW* 28) the scientist-protagonist Kerans speculates. Matthews's chapter draws extensively on historical representations of China in the 1930s and 1940s, allowing a discussion of the relationship between real and fictional English and Chinese landscapes and how these are re-visioned through memory and imagination. For Ballard, historical events cannot be remembered with certainty and instead "truth" is found in the elaborate fictions that awaken affective responses to the landscape. Shanghai and London are locations that embody these distinct positions since, in Ballard's fiction, Shanghai's dramatic scenes of war and natural disaster differs sharply from the banality and parochialism of the English landscape.

By contrast, Thomas Knowles finds the traces of a familiar cultural landscape in the apparently fantastical and otherworldly settings that are laid out in the stories that make up *Vermilion Sands*. His chapter addresses the beach, another of the symbolic spaces which recur in Ballard's work, and the strange Ballardian condition of "beach fatigue." His argument further extends the textual dimensions of the spatial realm, exploring the little-noted legacy of English literary Romanticism in the stories. Drawing on such canonical sources as Wordsworth's "Preface"

to *Lyrical Ballads* and the academic literary criticism of M. H. Abrams, it reads the sonic sculptures and singing statues of *Vermilion Sands* as postmodern transformations of the Romantic Aeolian lyre, played by the wind and by the lamia-like muses that figure in each story. The legacy of the glimpse of Romanticism in these stories, he suggests, is reworked into the beach-like location of “The Summer Cannibals” section of *The Atrocity Exhibition*.

Catherine McKenna’s “Zones of Non-Time” brings the textual landscape out of the traditionally literary and into the world of the contemporary news and information media, tracing the residues of some of the iconic media events that recur in Ballard’s writing to the extensive or even bizarre range of information sources that inspired his work. Ballard left a private library collection whose materials form a landscape of influence and inspiration. McKenna’s essay selects two items from this collection which mark the cultural experience of the twentieth century as presented in Ballard: the advent of the atomic bomb in the unnerving landscape of the nuclear testing site and the hauntingly replayed location of the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Andrew Warstat’s reading of “The Dead Astronaut,” Ballard’s short story that is a rare foray into the futuristic territory of space travel, captures the relocation from outer to inner space, since he argues that in it we find a “stalled future” in which a failed process of mourning suggests the “disappearance of tomorrow.” For Warstat, the protagonist’s return to this stalled future is approachable through the account of the mourning process in Freudian and post-Freudian psychology. It is characterized by the impossibility or absence of a primal scene. Instead of productively mourning one particular version of the future, the story reiterates a traumatic process of *nachträglichkeit* or “coming after.” In this respect it allows Warstat to ask whether the text embodies the interminable stasis of post-modernity or else becomes an allegory of the intensifying processes of commodification in modernity.

In the first of the essays on *The Atrocity Exhibition* itself, Richard Brown selects two examples of the intertextual to inform a discussion of the landscape of apocalyptic intertextuality which we find in Ballard's work. The first is the story by Alfred Jarry "The Crucifixion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race," which is recast with close similarity to the original in the fifteenth chapter of the book. This is typical of Ballard's turn for inspiration to the historical *avant-garde* of the early twentieth century and especially here to a notable precursor of surrealism for whom the irrational holds out the best hope of an explanation of an irrational world. The second example is found in the fascinating, profound, complex and sometimes contradictory admiration expressed by Ballard for the work of James Joyce, who, like Ballard, found himself a hero of many *avant-garde* movements whilst retaining his independence from all of them. Brown unearths intriguing aspects of Joyce's deep presence in *The Atrocity Exhibition* and elsewhere in Ballard.

The second essay on *The Atrocity Exhibition* itself is by Guglielmo Poli whose chapter focuses on the landscape of meaning and perception in the text, offering an extended discussion of the relation of the map to its territory that is formulated in the phrase "the map is not the territory," quoted by Ballard in the *Empire of the Sun* (1984). Poli explains that this phrase was coined by the Polish mathematician Alfred Korzybski and later developed by the British anthropologist Gregory Bateson, who theorized about a system able to demonstrate the natural world's unity as a result of the formal relations that constitute it. In *The Atrocity Exhibition* the reader is introduced into the strange world of its protagonists, who attempt to make up a picture of the world constituted by a geometry of relations between objects divested of their normal functions and emotional resonances. The characters' search for meaning is an attempt to understand the configuration of this imaginary geometry, which owes something to Korzybski and Bateson, and is illuminated by

an examination of the inseparability of the mind and its materials and the Jungian distinction between *creatura* and *pleroma*.

In the third essay on the text, “‘The Logic of the Visible at the Service of the Invisible’: Reading Invisible Literature in *The Atrocity Exhibition*,” Elizabeth Stainforth adventurously explores the textual landscapes of the book, highlighting and developing the concept of invisible literature, which was Ballard’s own term for different kinds of marginal reading material which populate and inform his work. This invisible literature, examples of which include scientific reports, company brochures and advertising leaflets, form the materials of a collage technique, which he adopts from the practices of surrealism. For Ballard the art movement was the first to place “the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible” and these invisible literatures are used by Ballard to further his exploration of the alternative psychic realities of inner space. Ballard’s invisible literature also presents a substantial challenge to the established conventions of cultural memory and to the preservation of the archive, to which the innovative digital archiving project accompanying the essay responds.

In his essay “Hidden Heterotopias in *Crash*,” Christopher Duffy visits those motorway landscapes which originate in the scientific and cultural experiments of *The Atrocity Exhibition* and become embodied in the lived world of Ballard’s most controversial dystopia, *Crash*. These landscapes are distinctively decoded through the spatial theories of Michel Foucault and Marc Augé as rebellious enclaves established within the motorway space. They may resemble Michel Foucault’s heterotopias of illusion which work to show up the enclosure and partitioning of the more actively governed spaces that surround them. One such enclave is the personalized car cabin itself which in this novel becomes a rebellious site effectively hidden from the controlling gaze of authority. Duffy argues that *Crash* does more than critique the motorized landscapes of modernity.

It defiantly re-appropriates the motorway as a radically experimental space open to different kinds of access that challenge proscriptive and officially sanctioned use.

The recognition that Ballardian landscapes represent a necessary conjuncture of psychological and political dimensions runs throughout these essays. Such conjunctures are fundamental to William Fingleton's chapter "Pillars of the Community: The Tripartite Characterization of *High-Rise*," which re-reads the architectural spaces of that novel of 1975, which is currently enjoying a new audience thanks to the 2015 Ben Wheatley film version. For Fingleton, it is characterization, as much as physical space, which provides the key to the landscape of this novel in that Wilder, Laing and Royal, the three residents of his increasingly psychopathic tower block, can be understood as representatives of different forms of class consciousness, as different parts of Freud's cognitive model, or as archetypal exemplars of the three psychological conditions of pronoia, paranoia and metanoia.

In conclusion, Jeanette Baxter's essay on Ballard's last novel, *Kingdom Come* (2006) finds in its symbolic landscape a direct recall of De Chirico's "nowhere" landscape as imagined in his painting *The Disquieting Muses* first painted in 1916 and his little-read 1926 novel *Hebdomeros*. She argues that Ballard takes up this Surrealist "nowhere" motif in order to intimate the survival of disparate forms of fascism in contemporary history, politics and culture, from the soft-totalitarianism forged by the illusion of consumerist choice, to the neo-fascist communities that commit racially-motivated acts of violence against displaced, immigrant workers. Baxter's challenging and provocative essay selects an example of Ballard's landscapes from the remarkable late flourishing of his fictional career in the first years of this century. It grounds his political critique of the contemporary in his deep engagement with the historical *avant-garde* and makes its political implications for our immediate future world unnervingly explicit.

Baxter's chapter originally formed the keynote paper at the conference *J.G. Ballard: Landscapes of Tomorrow*, which took place in the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery and the School of English at the University of Leeds in May 2014, with the additional support of the Business Confucius Institute at the University. Not all of the papers presented at the conference found a home in the collection and in some cases those that did have developed their intellectual journeys through the Ballardian landscape since that time. The collaborative and interdisciplinary spirit of the conference is everywhere apparent in this volume which is offered as a tribute to the enduring and developing dynamism and relevance of Ballard's work in the rapidly shifting and advancing critical, intellectual and research landscapes of tomorrow's worlds.

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